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Psychology Division

Divisional Report No. 24

# GOEBBELS' STATEMENTS AS INDICATORS OF GERMAN DOMESTIC ATTITUDES

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## SUMMARY

This study purports to show the extent to which Goebbels' statements indicate attitudes in the German population. The partial and complete texts of 105 different speeches and articles by Goebbels made public between March 1940 and March 15, 1942, were analyzed to determine the propaganda line and the attitudes directly revealed or implied.

It was found that as German military reversals increased and became known to the people at home, there was an increase in hostility and dissatisfaction among them. In attempting to combat these adverse conditions, Goebbels resorted to harsh criticism, friendly encouragement, and repetition of the theme that Germany faced annihilation unless she won the war.

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## SUMMARY

To determine the extent to which Goebbels' statements indicated, directly or indirectly, German domestic attitudes, partial and complete texts of 105 different speeches and articles for the past two years were collected. A qualitative analysis was made of the contents to determine the nature of the propaganda line, the attitudes directly revealed or implied, and the aim of the suggested propaganda line.

For the first period with which our study began (March 1940 to June 1940), favorable in a military sense to Germany, the inferences that we drew as to the attitudes of the people were: (a) they were doubtful of a repetition of Germany's military successes and (b) they questioned the necessity of a continuance of the war.

In the second period, neither favorable nor unfavorable (July 1940 to February 1941), we inferred that (a) the people not only questioned the duration of the war but the actual necessity of the war itself, (b) the people were fearful and apathetic, (c) the people were dismayed over the bombing of Berlin.

For the third period (March 1941 to September 1941), favorable to Germany, our inferences were that (a) the people still questioned the need of the war and

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lacked confidence in a German victory, (b) the people were amazed and confused as to the spread of the war, (c) they feared America's active participation and (d) the people complained about the sacrifices and hardships.

Beginning with the fourth period (October 1941 through January 1942), unfavorable from a military point of view, there is the first appearance of direct references to conditions on the home front. The direct admissions of Goebbels and our inferences showed (a) criticism over the lack of information about the Eastern campaign, (b) manifest apathy toward the possibility of Germany's winning the war, (c) open hostility over hardships and sacrifices on the home front, (d) fear as to what might happen with America's entry into the war, and (e) questioning as to reports of internal dissension within Germany proper.

In the fifth period (February 1942 to March 15, 1942), characterized as questionable for Germany, the directly revealed and the inferred attitudes were (a) there was still much dissatisfaction over the Russian campaign, (b) the apathy of the people toward the war continued, (c) the people were not confident of a German victory and (d) the people continued to grumble and complain.

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# GOEBBELS' STATEMENTS AS INDICATORS OF GERMAN DOMESTIC ATTITUDES

## I. Introduction

There can be little question that Goebbels occupies a key position in the Nazi hierarchy. Of his numerous official functions, we are here primarily interested in that of Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. In this capacity, it is his task to shape and channel the thoughts, beliefs and attitudes of the German people according to official policy. To realize this end, it is necessary for him to be well informed not only as to conditions in the international sphere but also to those on the home front.

It is reasonable to assume that Goebbels' speeches and articles are influenced both by Germany's military and diplomatic achievements abroad and by the conditions among the domestic population. Most certainly he calls attention to German successes and it could be expected that efforts would be made by him to justify German reverses. Furthermore, he has to meet the complaints of the people at home and he would have a constant problem of keeping the people satisfied with, or at least accepting, the difficult conditions of war time. In order to do this

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he would find it necessary to refer directly or by implication to those conditions about which the people complain. Thus, analysis of Goebbels' statements gives data upon which to base inferences as to conditions and attitudes within Germany.

The official propaganda line as presented by Goebbels has, especially recently, revealed various conditions on the home front, as seen in Table I. Here are listed the conditions which Goebbels has openly admitted in some of his speeches and articles. Such direct references refer to shortages of products in Germany, complaints of the people, discomforts suffered by the people, negative attitudes of the people, the effects of British air raids and broadcasts, and finally the existence of internal opposition and conflict within the Nazi Party itself.

Such direct admissions in propaganda to the home front are a relatively rare and recent feature. The data in Table I were obtained from the speeches and articles of Goebbels appearing since October 1941. In few, if any, of the speeches and articles before this period did any direct statements as to conditions in Germany appear in the official domestic propaganda line. However, it is possible to infer domestic conditions from the speeches. In the material subsequent to October 1941 statements which imply conditions are corroborated by direct admissions. Therefore,

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# TABLE I

## Conditions in Germany directly admitted by Goebbels

## October 1941 - March 15, 1942

(1) Actual Shortages
- a) potatoes
- b) beer
- c) winter clothing
- d) manpower
- e) Christmas candles
- f) New Year cards

(2) What People Complain About
- a) sacrifices
- b) discomforts attributed to gov't.
- c) waiting in line for food, cigarettes, fuel, etc.
- d) Eastern and North African Campaigns
- e) separation from children

(3) Discomforts Experienced by People
- a) wait half hour for trolley
- b) stand in line one hour to get 2 cigarettes
- c) radio goes off air because of air raids
- d) children sent off into country and separated from family
- e) over-crowded trains
- f) work is harder
- g) wives stand in line hours to get some vegetables
- h) lack of sleep because of air raids

(4) Negative Attitudes of People
- a) blame government for everything
- b) bad tempered and ill mannered
- c) lack self-discipline
- d) forget war is on--seek to hold on to peace-time values
- e) apathy
- f) lack enthusiasm
- g) idle and loaf instead of working harder
- h) over-rate part they play in war
- i) complain constantly of sacrifices which they make
- j) fraternize with Jew
- k) listen to BBC broadcasts
- l) start whispering campaigns detrimental to German interests

(5) Internal Opposition in Nazi Party
- a) crisis in party

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it would appear that similar indirect statements in the earlier speeches afford a reasonable basis for inferior conditions. A further check on such inferences is to be found in intercepted letters, interviews with people from Germany, and the stories of foreign correspondents.

## II. Methodology

The partial and complete texts of one hundred and five different speeches or articles by Goebbels have been obtained from several different sources for the period beginning with March 1940 and ending with March 15, 1942. In our attempt to determine the major theme or themes of each speech and article, a careful qualitative analysis was made of the contents and available titles of such utterances of Goebbels. From this we sought to arrive at a formulation of the nature of the propaganda line, the attitudes of the people directly referred to or implied, and the implied propaganda aims.

In order to determine the possible influence of military or diplomatic events on Goebbels' writings and speeches, the two years covered were divided into five periods on the basis of German successes and reversals in military events, entirely independent of the speeches themselves. The five periods were:

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I. March 1940 to June 1940. Characterized by German successes.

II. July 1940 to February 1941. A period of uncertainty during which German successes were balanced by military and diplomatic reversals.

III. March 1941 to September 1941. Characterized by German successes.

IV. October 1941 to January 1942. Characterized by German reversals.

V. February 1942 to March 15, 1942. A period of uncertainty for Germany.

## III. Results

### Period I. German Successes - March 1940 to June 1940

This period, with which our analysis begins, witnessed the conquest of Norway and Denmark, the invasion of the Low Countries, the Fall of France and the "Dunkerque" of the British.

In Table II are summarized the propaganda line, the inferences as to home conditions and the implied aim of the propagandist. There are two inferences about home conditions in this period:

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TABLE II

| Propaganda Line | Attitude in People Inferred from Propaganda Line | Aim of Propaganda Line |
|---|---|---|
| Germany prepared for victory. Fuehrer infallible. Britain decadent. | Doubt as to continuance of military successes. | To encourage and instill confidence in people. |
| Germany fighting defensive war. Enemy the aggressor. | Reluctance to continuance of war. | To justify the spread and continuance of war. |

(a) The people are doubtful as to the continuance of German military successes.

To dispel the doubts and possibly to allay the fears of the German people, Goebbels tells them that Germany was never so well prepared for an immediate victory as she is today, that the Fuehrer is well aware of what he is doing, and that the "plutocratic and decadent" British are without competent leadership.

(b) The people are questioning the necessity of a continuance of the war.

To eliminate possible reluctance on the part of the people toward a continuance of the war, we find Goebbels repeating the theme that Germany has been forced into a war which neither the leader nor the people desired. Every aggressive move is explained to the people by attributing aggression to the enemy. Thus Poland was the aggressor. Britain planned to invade Norway and Denmark. The Low

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Countries plotted a "German Revolution". England and France declared war against Germany.

Period II. Uncertainty - July 1940 to February 1941

This period included the Battle of Britain, the beginning of the Libyan Campaign, and the introduction of Lend-Lease Aid to Britain.

TABLE III.

| Propaganda Line | Attitude in People Inferred from Propaganda Line | Aim of Propaganda Line |
|---|---|---|
| Doom of Britain.<br>Coming Victory.<br>Britain declared war.<br>War as heroic performance of a nation.<br>Germany a "have-not". | People question:<br>(1) duration of war<br>(2) need for the war | Assurance as to nearness of victory.<br>Justification of war itself. |
| Barbarism of British. | Dismay over bombings. | To whip up hatred of British. |
| Boundless faith in Fuehrer. Need for more sacrifices. | Fear, apathy, psychic fatigue. | To encourage and increase confidence of people.<br>To maintain war effort of home front. |

The dominant theme of Goebbels' speeches in this period is the invasion and imminent downfall of Britain which will bring the German people their final victory. From the nature and manner of the propaganda line for this period, as summarized in Table III, the general inferences for this period are:

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(a) The people are not only questioning the duration of the war, but the actual necessity for the war itself.

Goebbels avoids answering the question by repeating from time to time his supreme confidence in an imminent victory which will end the war. Even to the extent of misquoting foreign statesmen, he offers proof of the weakness and impending doom of the British Empire. The general aim at this point is to assure the people of a complete victory for the Reich. He goes so far as to say that the war is practically over and that the government is already concentrating on the New Order.

In justifying the war itself, which justification Goebbels evidently finds necessary, he offers three different reasons: first, he reiterates that England declared war against Germany; second, that Germany is a have-not nation whereas all the other countries have what they need for their national expansion; third, that "war is the most heroic performance of a nation". In his effort to glorify war, he points out that it is not only a great equalizer, but also a great educator.

(b) The people are dismayed over the bombing of Berlin.

Instead of explaining how it was possible for the R.A.F. to penetrate the Reich defenses to bomb Berlin, Goebbels attempts to whip up hatred for the British by accusing Churchill of ordering the bombing of civilians

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in Germany. The general theme is that the British aviators are criminals, cowards and brutes and will not stop at anything. He is still very confident of a German victory, and tries to assure the people that they have nothing to fear.

(c) The people are fearful and apathetic as to the invulnerability of the home front and the infallibility of the Fuehrer.

With the coming of a second winter of war, the increase in air raids, and the continued existence of the British Isles, Goebbels finds it necessary to combat the psychic fatigue which seems to be setting in on the home front. He reaffirms the boundless faith of the people in the Fuehrer, and the need for more sacrifices. To allay their fears, he reviews and glorifies the major successes of the German armed forces on the continent, and predicts a repetition of these successes.

## Period III. German Successes - March 1941 to September 1941

This period included the Balkan Campaign and the launching of the Eastern Campaign. As Table IV shows the inferences from the official domestic propaganda line that may be drawn for this period are:

(a) The people still seem to question the need of the war itself and are not too confident of a German victory.

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From March to June, Goebbels finds it necessary to whip up the people's enthusiasm for the war and allay their fears as to a possible German defeat. He reaffirms his confidence in a German victory and emphasizes the people's faith in their leader. There is frequent heroization of the leader and of the people who are identified with him. The major propaganda line for this period is that the leader is a genius and that consequently Germany's armed forces are invulnerable.

TABLE IV

| Propaganda Line | Attitude in People Inferred from Propaganda Line | Aim of Propaganda Line |
|---|---|---|
| Genius of Leader Germany invulnerable | People question war itself; Doubtful as to victory | To instill confidence To appeal to national pride |
| Defensive war Kultur at Stake | People amazed and confused over spread of war | To justify Germany's aggression by shifting blame on enemy |
| Roosevelt heading U.S. into war | People fearful of American participation | Assurance as to reluctance of American populace to war; Admonitions as to what might occur, i.e. active participation of America in war |
| War against Russia is precondition to final struggle (with English) | People tired of war; tend to complain about sacrifices, bombings, etc. | Glorification of suffering for a cause |
| Recognition of sufferings | | Assurance as to coming victory |
| | | Sympathy through friendly recognition of sacrifices, etc. |

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(b) The people are amazed and confused as to the continued spread of the war.

During the Balkan and Eastern campaigns there is again a shifting of the blame upon the enemy and an emphasis upon the defensive aspect of Germany's position. The people are told repeatedly that this is a defensive war and that they have to fight to preserve the Kultur of the Reich.

(c) The people fear the active participation of the United States in a war against Germany.

In August and September, 1941, Goebbels introduces and repeats the statement that Roosevelt is heading his country into a war which the American people do not want. Roosevelt is depicted as the arch-villain against whom all hate and blame should be directed. At this point it would seem that Goebbels finds it necessary to reassure the German people that the American public does not wish to fight against them. However, he also tends to caution them of the possibility of American participation as long as Roosevelt remains the leader.

(d) The people complain that they are tired of war with its sacrifices and hardships.

As balm, Goebbels offers them recognition of and sympathy for their sufferings. He promises retribution for the English nocturnal air raids which are admitted to have had an adverse effect upon civilian morale. He assures them that the present war against Russia is the prerequisite to the final struggle (with the English). Beginning with

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September 1941, there is a change in the propaganda line. Goebbels now points out that this is no longer a defensive war to preserve the Kultur of the Reich. We have here the beginning of the "back-to-the-wall" motif, namely, that the German people face annihilation unless they win, that their very national existence is at stake.

Period IV. German Reversals - October 1941 through January 1942.

During this time the Eastern campaign with its Russian successes, increased British bombing of German cities, and the entrance of the U. S. into the war mark the period as one of German reversals. In this period Goebbels had to resolve the myth of Hitler's infallibility, and rationalize Hitler's boast of June 1940 that "There are no more islands" and the failure of the German armed forces to win a decisive victory over the Russians. The principal propaganda themes of this period have been succinctly voiced by Goebbels himself as that of "optimistic realism" and "enthusiastic readiness to do one's duty". The principle of "optimistic realism" has here been designated as the "back-to-the-wall" motif. An increase in the frequency of this appeal is noted after America's entry into the war.

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TABLE V

| Propaganda Line | Attitude in People Inferred from Propaganda Line | Aim of Propaganda Line |
|---|---|---|
| Optimistic Realism | Criticism re lack of information | To appease |
| | Apathy | To maintain war effort |
| | Hostility re sacrifices | To criticize and encourage |
| Enthusiastic Readiness to do one's duty | Fear as to defeat | To instill confidence |
| | Questioning as to internal dissension on home front | To combat "rumors" started by Allies |

The attitudes of the people as directly revealed by and as inferred from the speeches and articles of Goebbels, as shown in Table V, indicate that the home front is characterized by:

(1) Criticism over the lack of information about the Eastern campaign.
(2) Manifest apathy toward possibility of German successes.
(3) Open hostility over hardships and sacrifices on home front.
(4) Fear as to what might happen with America's active participation.
(5) Questioning as to reports of internal dissension within Germany proper.

Taken together these inferences indicate a state of mind in the people that is somewhat hostile to the continuance of the nation's war effort. In dealing with it Goebbels resorts to the "optimistic realism" or "back-to-the-wall" policy and resorts to frequent admissions of

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losses on the Eastern front and hardships at home. In his speech of November 9th, which prepared the stage for the above-mentioned policy, he frankly admits that Germany was prepared for a war which was inevitable. Even had Poland been willing to cooperate, or had England and France been willing to accept the Fuehrer's peace proposal after the fall of Poland, the war would have had to continue. As Goebbels himself has written, "Having begun to march, we must march on ...; no longer a chance of withdrawing from it... If we do not wage it today ... (we will) have to wage it in the future, probably under less favorable conditions..."

Continuing his policy of "optimistic realism", in the month of November Goebbels decided to answer various questions that seem to have been perplexing the people. He stressed the fact that there is no possibility of retreat, for should Germany be defeated they could not even expect another Versailles which at least permitted national rebirth. He reaffirmed that this is a struggle for the very existence of the German people against an enemy superior in numbers. At the same time, he told them that fate had given them a hard but heroic role to fulfill and that it was not permissible to find fault with fate. More important than the question of "when will this war end" is the question of "how". In answer to the question of when Britain will fall, he warned them not to be impatient for "a good thing takes

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its time, and what has been built up in centuries does not collapse within a matter of months." There is no longer any expression of confidence in the imminent downfall of the British Empire. In fact, there is a frank admission that the invasion of Britain is a rather difficult task.

During the middle of this period (November 15 to December 15, 1941), Goebbels found it necessary to once more use the scape-goat motif, namely, that the Jews are to blame for the beginning and extension of the war. The fact that he found it necessary to remind the people that the Jews are their enemies may be indicative of an apathetic attitude on the part of the people. In fact, he harshly rebuked the German people for showing sympathy toward the sufferings of the Jews in the Reich. At this time also there was an admission on the part of Goebbels that Lend-Lease Aid can and has helped to prolong the war. At the beginning of December, he found it necessary to explain why the government has been silent in regard to military successes or failures on the Eastern Front. Such periods of silence he attempted to dramatize and veil with secrecy by referring to them as being purposive and laden with subtle significance.

The second principle of "enthusiastic readiness to do one's duty", received its greatest emphasis during the months of December and January. Goebbels sought to

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abate the peoples' apathy toward a third winter of war by reiterating the point that the year 1941 is not the year 1918, that Germany is much better prepared, and that former allies of Britain and the United States, (Italy and Japan) are now fighting on the side of Germany. He appealed to the people to make more sacrifices, to give even when they can't spare, to imitate the ideal of self-immolation which the German soldiers on the Eastern Front are striving after, and to remember the important role which destiny has given to Germany. When this type of appeal for more sacrifices did not result in an abatement of the complaints and indifference of the people, he delivered a brutal indictment against them. He dictated the meaning of sacrifice, and laid down the law as to who is justified in complaining about sacrifices. It is also interesting to note here that three days after Hitler assumed command of the land armies, Goebbels made an appeal to the soldiers on all fronts to believe, follow and fight for the Fuehrer, victory and peace.

As part of the principle of "enthusiastic readiness to do one's duty", Goebbels, in the first half of January, decided to step up the enthusiasm of the people by ordering artists to depict graphically the spirit of sacrifice and gratitude of the German people toward the army. With the completion of the winter relief campaign,

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he utilized the response of the people as an indication of overwhelming national solidarity. Foreign reports that the German people were forced to make donations were ridiculed and an appeal was made to the people to use common sense. When the people continued to complain that they were tired of being constantly reminded of the war, the Minister of Propaganda accused them of attempting to evade reality, of running away from the truth. The stories of inner revolt and discontent in Germany were belittled and held to be figments of the enemy's imagination. Evidently the German people needed reassurance on this point.

Toward the end of January 1942, there was some admission of conflict within the Party itself, and praise is given those party members who helped in strengthening the inner front. There was also, at this time, a reaffirmation of confidence in the Fuehrer and a restatement of the conviction that as in the past so in the future. It is also to be noted that until this time, Goebbels had been criticizing the people and urging them to make more sacrifices. With the close of the month of January, we find him striking a more positive tone, namely, to the effect that the people are "yearning" to contribute their share. As evidence of the intense desire of the people to serve and endure hardships Goebbels offered the results of the winter relief campaign, in which he claims there was 100% support of the army by the civilian population.

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It is significant to note here ~~that direct~~ references to adverse conditions and attitudes on the home front appear during this unfavorable period for the first time. Such direct references to adverse or undesirable attitudes in the audience have been a noteworthy feature of German propaganda to predominately antagonistic audiences, such as the French and Czechs. Thus its appearance in home propaganda may be symptomatic of a new or increasing hostility to the Nazi regime. As such it would tend to corroborate the inference that we have drawn as to increased hostility on the home front toward renewed demands for more sacrifices.

Period V. Uncertainty (?) - February 1, 1942 to March 15, 1942.

During this period the Axis powers began their counter-offensive in Libya and Japan, the new active ally, had continued successes, but there were reversals on the Eastern Front and increased anti-Nazi activity by the British in the West.

As Table VI shows, the inferred and directly revealed attitudes for this period are:

(1) There is still much dissatisfaction over the Russian Campaign.
(2) The apathy of the people toward the war continues.
(3) The people are not confident of a German victory.
(4) The people continue to grumble and complain; more specifically, they are described by Goebbels as being "short-tempered" and "ill-mannered".

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TABLE VI

| Propaganda Line | Attitude in People Inferred from Propaganda Line | Aim of Propaganda Line |
|---|---|---|
| "Optimistic Realism" | Continued dissatisfaction over Eastern campaign | To allay anxiety<br>To combat Allied reports |
| | Apathy toward war | To maintain home front's war effort |
| "Enthusiastic Readiness to do one's duty" | Doubt as to German success | To encourage and dispel fears and doubts |
| | Continued grumbling and complaining | To explain proneness of people toward open and frequent grumbling and complaints. |

Of the three major topics discussed by Goebbels in his speeches and articles, the most frequently mentioned is that of the need for more sacrifices on the home front. Undoubtedly, he found it important not only to quiet the people's dissatisfaction over the Russian campaign, but also to stimulate their war efforts on the home front, to change or eliminate their negative attitudes toward victory, and finally, to justify their proneness to grumble and complain. In his attempt to realize the above, we find him employing a variety of devices, chief of which are his principles of "optimistic realism" and "enthusiastic readiness to do one's duty".

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In his effort to capitalize upon the hardships of the third winter of war and the sacrifices which the people have been forced to endure, Goebbels repeated the theme that it is much more honorable to have faith in times of adversity than confidence in times of success. He frankly admitted that the winter had caused many tribulations, but he stressed the rich experience gained from the hard winter just passed.

In addition to appealing for more sacrifices on the part of civilians, Goebbels called upon the German people to show more self-discipline and to maintain courage and faith in their own strength. As part of his "back-to-the-wall" motif, he utilized parables, analogies, repetition, glorification of the past and prophecy to bolster his arguments.

A second topic which Goebbels found it necessary to deal with upon different occasions was that of the pending downfall of the British Empire. His task, at this point, would seem to have been the convincing of the home front as to the strength of the Axis powers. In his attempt to encourage and also to minimize the lack of German successes on the Eastern Front, he capitalized on Japanese successes in the Pacific, which he designated as Axis successes. In addition, he tried to impress the German people that the hopes and plans of the Allies have been constantly checked and destroyed.

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It would seem that the Minister ~~Of Propaganda~~ realized the need of long and persuasive arguments to convince the German populace that Britain was actually near collapse. To this end, he informed them that the English had to resort to philosophy in order to reconcile themselves to their losses. The only logical thing for England to do, according to Goebbels, was to attempt to salvage whatever she could of her former Empire. By means of analogy and appeals to history and destiny, Goebbels concluded that there was no hope whatever for the continued existence of the British Empire. He refused to commit himself as to when Britain would fall.

A third topic which comes in for frequent mention during this period is that of America's role in the war. Goebbels tried to dispel the fear of the people as to the actual striking power of America. By playing up Japanese successes in the Pacific and by falsifying the facts, he depicted a gloomy picture of confusion prevailing in the United States.

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